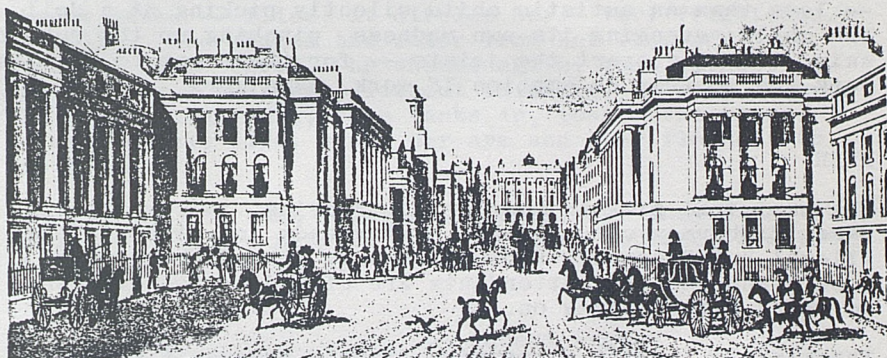


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LENG-TCH'É (AN EXECUTION BY DISMEMBERMENT, 1905)

— Cf. Pekin qui s'en va, Ed. A. Maloine, Paris, 1913

This man is being dismembered like a doll. His skin is pinched up like the rubber skin of a doll, a knife is pressed in, then turned until long or short strips of skin can be removed. Like the joints of a doll, the elbows, the knees, the ankles are taken apart.

The men who dismember this man work hard. When they are not working, they sit at board games or cards and they are preoccupied with turning of cards, the counting of spots on markers. When they win, they are satisfied and they are angry when the spots don't add to advantage. They enjoy company. They joke and laugh, loud and soft. They gossip. When their very young children say things that seem clever, they are startled and proud. Some love beautiful things, some can't and just like pretty things. They are dumbstruck by the beauty of certain persons. They touch their skin, the skin like silk, the silk like still water. They long for the act of physical love. They love comfort. In Winter, they burrow the counterpane. When Summer sweat drips in their eyes, they curse. They feel pain before they pinch the candle.

These men dismember another man. They are disgusted by this work but it's THEIR work. They narrow their eyes and only look at the cut in progress. The detail. They don't look at the man's face (he just looks like a log with a human head attached now). They recoil, but work. Their stomachs tighten, their throats tighten, they struggle to show no emotion but their faces long to twist into something terrible. But they work. To be disgusted without portraying disgust is work. To show emotion less — less than an autistic child silently picking at a doll, the child revenging its own madness, pinching up the rubber skin, twisting apart the joints — for these men to do this work and portray no emotion IS work, hard work.

PIER

The municipal pier in Deer Beach, Florida, is very long. Here, fishermen catch shark, hammerheads and blues. It's illegal but Everybody Knows Everybody (the fishermen are locals and the pier attendants are afraid of retaliation) so shark fishing goes on.

Sharking is a night occupation, partly because fishing is better at night, partly as a nod to the law. Naturally, the police, mostly local men, know what's going on but they don't interfere. Some of them shark too. And they are responsible to the sheriff, an elected official.

Catching a shark is very dramatic; the blues and hammerheads taken can be bigger than a man. Catching a shark is work too since sharks fight long and hard. When the shark is reeled close enough, gaffs are used to haul it up to the decking. Shark skin is very tough and the fish struggles and the fishermen are excited so the gaffs are used repeatedly. Even after the shark is landed, it continues to fight, snapping and thrashing. The hook and butt end of the gaffs, aimed at the head, are used to kill it. Sometimes the shark is so lively the fishermen will not risk getting close enough to use gaffs so the shark is left to die in its own time. Even people who don't like sharks, or say they don't, rarely stay to the end.

The pier is on the public beach. In season, thousands of tourists swim here. The tourists surf here also. Since the waves are not very good, they surf whenever they can, often at night. Then, the sea is black, opaque. The surfers, in pairs, paddle out, talking to each other. Sometimes, waiting for the waves, bobbing on the ocean illuminated only by the lights of the pier, the surfers sing to each other.